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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES . OCI #0557/74
18 Mar. 1974

BULGARIA

National Party Conference to Begin March 20

A plenum of the Bulgarian Party central committee met late last week to finalize plans for the upcoming party conference. It set Wednesday, March 20, as the date for the conference to convene, and approved a tentative agenda that includes an item on labor productivity and a report by first secretary Todor Zhivkov.

Meanwhile, a recent flurry of face-lifting activity in downtown Sofia suggested that the leadership was preparing for high level foreign dignitaries to attend the conference. There has not yet been any announcement from Sofia, however, that foreign guests have begun to arrive.

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ROMANIA

Party Plenum Expected Shortly

The party executive committee, which met last Friday to laud Ceausescu's latest round of state visits, also called a central committee plenum for March 25. Past practice suggests that this meeting will be quickly followed by a session of the Grand National Assembly that will rubberstamp the plenum's declarations and resolutions. It is likely that a congress of the Socialist Unity Front, which has twice been postponed because of Ceausescu's travels, also will soon be held.

In addition to paying proper obeissance to Ceausescu and his personal diplomacy, the plenum may also set the date for the 11th party congress expected to be held in late November.

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State Dept. review completed

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Regime Inveighs Against Western Influences

Embassy Prague reports a recent upsurge in Czechoslovak ideological activity, with stress on the dangers that Western propaganda and ideas pose for socialism. Concurrent with media attacks on the Western proposals for Basket III at CSCE, Prague is reexamining the ideological and professional credentials of leaders and managers in party and state organs, in industry, research institutes, and educational facilities. The Embassy believes this campaign indicates that the recent meetings in Moscow of party secretaries decided that Western influences in Eastern Europe are already unacceptably high. The Embassy doubts, however, that Prague's efforts will bring any appreciable lessening of Western culture's general influence on the Czechoslovak people.

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HUNGARY

Reaction to President's Comments on Europe

A Hungarian English-language commentary says that President Nixon's statement on US-European relations is "surprisingly sharp" even in light of Washington's obvious uneasiness about independent West European steps. At the same time, the commentary asserts that "threats" of a unilateral US troop withdrawal from Europe "cannot be taken seriously" because the US presence is not a favor to West Europeans but "something basic to American world strategy." For European ears, the commentator concludes by raising the old question of whether the US wants Western Europe to be an ally or a dependent.

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Quiet Anniversary

In contrast to the last two years, Hungarian celebrations of the anniversary of the 1848 revolution on March 15 did not include any anti-regime demonstrations by young people. The Embassy reports that well-organized, regime ceremonies and very heavy police security apparently precluded any spontaneous outbursts, even though students were out of school for the day. Official observances drew a crowd of about 15,00 at the statue of Hungary's national poet, Sandor Petofi, to hear speeches, observe wreath layings and sing the national anthem.

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